



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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State Departments of Health and Agriculture Reduce Algae Warning to Advisory for Homme Dam

BISMARCK, N.D.—The North Dakota Departments of Health (NDDoH) and Agriculture (NDDA), Animal Health Division, have removed the warning and instead have issued an advisory for blue-green algae, also known as cyanobacteria, at Homme Dam near Park River.

Test results from samples collected earlier this week have indicated that the level of cyanotoxins in Homme Dam near Park River have decreased to acceptable levels. However, since conditions can change quickly, people are urged to err on the side of caution and avoid waters that look discolored or scummy, or that have a foul odor. Blue-green algae discolor the water they live in, and can cause foam, scum or mats to appear on the surface.

The public is urged to avoid contact with or swallowing water affected by blue-green algae, and to protect their pets and livestock from waters that are affected.

Blue-green algae blooms can produce poisonous cyanotoxins that, if swallowed, can cause severe diarrhea and vomiting; numb lips, tingling fingers and toes; dizziness; or rashes, hives or skin blisters. Children are at higher risk than adults for illness because their smaller size can allow them to get a relatively larger dose of toxin.

The Department of Health and the Department of Agriculture, Animal Health Division, recommend these steps to avoid exposure to cyanotoxins:

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Visit the health department home page at www.ndhealth.gov.

- Respect any advisories announced by public health authorities. If you see posted signs or hear messages to stay out of a certain body of water, respect the warning.
- Do not swim, water ski or boat in areas where the water is discolored or where you see foam, scum or mats of green or blue-green algae on the water.
- If you accidentally swim in water that might have a cyanobacteria bloom, rinse off with fresh water as soon as possible.
- Do not let pets or livestock swim in or drink from areas where the water is discolored or where you see foam, scum or mats of algae on the water.
- If pets (especially dogs) swim in scummy water, rinse them off immediately – do not let them lick the algae (and toxins) off their fur.
- Don't irrigate lawns or golf courses with pond water that looks scummy or smells bad.

For more information about the effects of blue-green algae blooms on pets and livestock, contact the Animal Health Division, North Dakota Department of Agriculture at 701.328.2655. For more information on public health issues, contact Karl Rockeman, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.5225.

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